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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Thirtieth session
Beirut, 25-28 June 2018

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

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Annotations

A. Senior officials segment

1. Opening of the senior officials segment

The thirtieth session of the Commission will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut. It will comprise two segments: the senior officials segment, which will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, 25 June 2018, and the ministerial segment, which will begin at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 27 June 2018. The representative of Qatar will give the opening address as Chair of the twenty-ninth session, and the representative of the ESCWA secretariat will give a welcome address.

2. Election of officers

Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that member States shall chair the sessions of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations,* and that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, elect from among the representatives of its members two Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur, who shall remain in office until such time as their successors shall be elected and be eligible for re-election. At the twenty-ninth session, it was agreed that Tunisia would chair the thirtieth session.

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 8, article 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, after the election of the Chair according to rule 12, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda. The provisional agenda was drawn up by the secretariat in consultation with the Chair of the twenty-ninth session. Pursuant to that rule, the Commission will be presented with the provisional agenda and annotations for the session in the present document E/ESCWA/30/L.1, and with the organization of work in document E/ESCWA/30/L.2. The Commission may adopt these two documents in the form in which they are submitted or make amendments thereto.

4. Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the twenty-ninth session of the Commission (E/ESCWA/30/3)

Under this item, the Commission will consider requests received from States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of the Commission to participate as observers in its thirtieth session, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1818 (LV), paragraph 4, and rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission.

The Commission is invited to approve those requests.

Global and regional developments

5. Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2017-2018 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/1/Summary)

* ESCWA member States in the Arabic alphabetical order are as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Iraq, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and Yemen.

The Survey is published annually by ESCWA pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/56, and ESCWA resolutions 270 (XXIV) and 303 (XXVII). The Survey analyses economic and social variables in the Arab region within a global and regional framework, and considers current financial reforms in the region. The Survey's analysis of economic and social situations in Arab countries forms the basis for policy discussions, peer learning, keeping pace with global and regional developments, and tackling national development challenges. Survey projections on the impact of policies differ between oil-producing and non-oil producing countries. The summary of analyses and conclusions can be used to adapt national development plans to country needs, and to formulate strong and coordinated financial policies aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable economic transformation.

The Commission is invited to take note of key economic and social developments presented in the Survey, and to comment thereon.

6. Megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region (E/ESCWA/30/4)

The evaluation of megatrends forms part of preparatory studies for an ESCWA project on formulating a common strategy to develop a regional multimodal transport system to promote inclusive and sustainable development in the Arab region. Under this item, the Commission will consider a document that reviews megatrends in the transport sector resulting from various geographic, economic, regulatory, technological and political factors, which together will contribute to moulding the global transport landscape over the period 2030-2050, including the Chinese One Belt One Road Initiative, the impact of climate change on opening new shipping lines through the Arctic Ocean, a bullet train with speeds exceeding 1,000 kilometres per hour, the use of clean energy sources and solar energy as alternatives to fossil fuels, the digital revolution and the regulatory solutions it provides, and self-driving vehicles. The study also identifies megatrends in global transport and their expected impact on the Arab region.

The Commission is invited to discuss the study and comment thereon.

7. Support to the Palestinian people: Impact of the Israeli occupation and practices (E/ESCWA/30/5)

Pursuant to resolutions adopted at previous ESCWA sessions, especially resolutions 316 (XXVIII) and 326 (XXIX), the secretariat is requested to survey Israeli violations of the Palestinian people's rights and international law, to document their economic and social repercussions, and to submit periodic reports on this issue. Under this item, the representative of the secretariat will present a report on the economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Israeli political practices that violate international law. The report gives an overview of the cumulative impact of various Israeli practices and policies on the Palestinian people. The report also focuses of the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, and the policy to demolish houses and other structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Moreover, the report considers the impact of Israeli policies and practices on vital sectors in the State of Palestine.

The Commission is invited to take note of and discuss the contents of the report.

Work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

8. Outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (E/ESCWA/30/6)

Under this item, the representative of the secretariat will present the outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development on the theme "Natural resources, future generations and the common good" (Beirut, 24-26 April 2018). ESCWA organized the Forum under the patronage of the Lebanese

Prime Minister Saad Hariri, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations operating in the Arab region.

The theme of the Arab Forum was chosen in line with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2018 on the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". The outcomes of the Arab Forum and other regional forums were presented to the High-level Political Forum.

The Commission is invited to take note of the Forum's outcomes and provide comments on the way forward.

9. Links between information and communication technology and sustainable development (E/ESCWA/30/7)

Under this item, the representative of the secretariat will present a document on strengthening information and communication technology sectors in the Arab region, and aligning them with sustainable development objectives.

Since the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, ESCWA has played a pioneering role in regional efforts to build an information society. Since the overall review in 2015, which enhanced the role of regional commissions, ESCWA has worked on connecting regional efforts to build an information society with efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on promoting the development of a digital economy and smart societies in the Arab region, and on using information and communication technology to support development goals. The aim of the document is to consider member States' views on future efforts to link between the process of the World Summit on the Information Society and the sustainable development process in the Arab region.

The Commission is invited to take note of accomplishments and implemented activities, and to comment on the way forward.

10. Proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate policies at ESCWA (E/ESCWA/30/8)

Under this item, the representative of the secretariat will present a detailed proposal on the establishment of an Arab centre for climate policies under the ESCWA secretariat, as adopted by the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting after taking into account comments from member States. The centre's proposed functions include providing technical support and advisory services to member States on climate change mitigation and adaptation at the regional, subregional and national levels, and in sectors directly and indirectly affected by climate change; supporting government institutions in following up on the implementation of international and regional instruments on climate change; coordinating between Arab countries and across sectors to reach unified positions and common ground in climate change negotiations; and building negotiating capacity through workshops on priority issues for member States.

The Commission is invited to consider the detailed proposal and comment on the way forward.

11. Activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/30/9)

Under this item, the representative of the secretariat will present a report on the Centre's accomplishments and implemented activities over the period 2016-2017, including advisory services, studies and technical reports, projects, workshops, and partnerships.

The report sets out the Centre's workplan for 2018 and its sustainable development objectives, as adopted by the Board of Governors at its seventh meeting on 27 November 2017. The workplan forms part of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019.

The Commission is requested to take note of the Centre's accomplishments and implemented activities, and to comment on the way forward.

12. Implementation of the Doha Declaration and other resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session (E/ESCWA/30/10)

Under this item, the representative of the secretariat will review the activities undertaken by ESCWA to implement the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session (Doha, 13-15 December 2016) on its various areas of work and on issues of concern to member States. Moreover, under this item, member States can review their efforts to implement parts of the Declaration that are relevant to them.

The Commission is invited to take note of the activities implemented since the twenty-ninth ESCWA session pursuant to the resolutions, and to present progress reports on its achievements in implementing the resolutions.

13. Reports of the Executive Committee (E/ESCWA/30/11)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the reports of two Executive Committee meetings held in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions. The third meeting of the Executive Committee was held in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017 (E/ESCWA/2017/EC.3/8/Report), and the fourth meeting was held in Beirut on 13 and 14 December 2017 (E/ESCWA/2017/EC.4/9/Report). The two reports contain recommendations, topics of discussion, the organization of work, and the lists of documents and participants for both meetings.

The Commission is invited to adopt the two reports.

14. Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies (E/ESCWA/30/12)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the following reports of ESCWA subsidiary bodies that were not presented to the Executive Committee, on sessions held in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions:

(a) Report of the eighth session of the Committee on Women, held in Beirut on 4 and 5 October 2017 (E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/IG.1/7/Report);

(b) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017 (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/6/Report);

(c) Report of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, held in Beirut on 20 and 21 December 2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/9/Report);

(d) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on liberalization of foreign trade), held on 27 and 28 November 2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/11/Report);

(e) Report of the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on financing for development), held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report).

The Commission is invited to adopt the reports.

Administrative issues

Under this section, the Commission will consider the following documents:

15. Performance under the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/30/13)

The document presented under this item contains a general performance evaluation of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, and a review of outcomes and lessons learned in implementing the seven subprogrammes. It also provides a performance evaluation of the executive administration, including the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section, the Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section, and the Administrative Services Division.

The Commission is invited to review the report and provide comments on the general performance of ESCWA and its seven subprogrammes.

16. Technical cooperation and regional advisory services (E/ESCWA/30/14)

Under this item, the Commission will consider a document on the technical cooperation activities undertaken by ESCWA over the biennium 2016-2017 within the framework of the following three financing mechanisms: the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation, the United Nations Development Account, and extrabudgetary resources. Activities funded by the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation aim to strengthen member States' capacity through training activities, advisory services and technical guidance on formulating public policies, strategies and workplans in various areas of expertise. Activities funded by the United Nations Development Account and from extrabudgetary resources include implementing regional and inter-regional projects.

The Commission is invited to take note of the activities and their outcomes, and to comment thereon.

17. Financial status of the Commission (E/ESCWA/30/15)

Under this item, the Commission will consider a report on the financial status of ESCWA programmes, including financial allocations and expenditures under the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and extrabudgetary resources.

The Commission is invited to take note of the financial status of ESCWA and comment thereon.

18. Proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 (E/ESCWA/30/16)

Under this item, the Commission will consider a report on the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the light of emerging issues requiring the review and amendment of some activities.

The Commission is invited to consider and adopt the proposed amendments.

19. New vision for reform in the United Nations

Under this item, a presentation will be made to the Commission on key reforms contained in the Secretary-General's initiative.

Member States are invited to take note of those reforms.

B. Ministerial segment

20. Opening of the ministerial segment

The opening session of the ministerial segment will start at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 27 June 2017. It will comprise opening remarks by the representative of Qatar as Chair of the twenty-ninth session of the Commission; a statement by the representative of Tunisia as Chair of the thirtieth session; a statement by Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA; and an address by the representative of Lebanon, the host country.

21. Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region: roundtable discussions (E/ESCWA/30/17/CRP.1)

ESCWA selected "Technology for development" as the general theme of its thirtieth session. The secretariat has prepared a study on the topic, which focuses on creating decent employment opportunities and empowering young people (E/ESCWA/30/17).

The topic will be considered at the ministerial level in three roundtable discussions, with reference to a summary containing a set of points to guide the discussions. The roundtable discussions will cover the following:

(a) Integrating technology and innovation into national development plans;

(b) Role of technology in tackling challenges in the Arab region;

(c) Pioneering technologies: opportunities and challenges, and future plans.

The roundtable discussions will result in a ministerial declaration on technology for sustainable development in the Arab region, for adoption by member States at the closing of the session.

22. Date and venue of the thirty-first session of the Commission

Rule 1, paragraph (a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that the regular sessions of the Commission shall be held every two years, at a time to be determined by the members of the Commission. The Commission is expected to hold its thirty-first session in Beirut in 2020, unless it receives an invitation from a member State wishing to host the session.

23. Other matters

This item covers any other matters that members of the Commission might wish to discuss.

24. Adoption of the outcome document and resolutions emanating from the session

Under this item, the Commission will consider the draft ministerial declaration on technology for sustainable development in the Arab region, which will emanate from the roundtable discussions.

25. Adoption of the report of the thirtieth session of the Commission

Under this item, the Commission will adopt the draft report of the thirtieth session, containing recommendations and resolutions.